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Camden informs us, that St. Durtact, a disciple of St. Patrick, founded a monastery at Antrim. A few years ago, in removing some old houses in the vicinity of the tower, extensive foundations and many human bones were discovered, which would lead us to conclude this to have been the site of the abbey mentioned by Camden. This is the more likely, as our towers always stand near some ancient place of worship: the writer is not aware of a single instance of their being found apart from some religious foundation, and in a few instances they are even ingrafted on those buildings. Tradition ascribes the erection of this Tower, as well as others in the north of Ireland, to the celebrated architect called the "Gobban Saer," or "Gobban the Builder," and who is believed, in this part of the country, to have been a woman. It would be highly interesting to ascertain if there be any *historical* evidences of the celebrated person, whose name is thus popularly connected with the erection of so many of these remarkable structures. A tradition so general could hardly be without foundation; and, if we could determine the period in which "the Gobban" flourished, we should have much light thrown on this hitherto mysterious subject.

It is not a little strange that we should still be without a correct list of these towers, so that even their numbers have not been ascertained. About 1791, a list was published by the Rev. Edward Ledwich, which is, however, very imperfect. In the County of Antrim he only notices the tower just described, and that on Ram Island; those of Ardmoyle and Trumery are omitted. At Dunaman, near Croagh, County Limerick, and Rosenallis, Queen's County, are also round pillar-towers, which are not given in his catalogue. S. M'S.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

We have hitherto refrained from offering any opinion of our own, on the long unsettled question of the origin and uses of our Round Towers, lest we might be suspected of a desire to influence the Royal Irish Academy in their decision on the merits of the Prize Essays, submitted to them on this national subject of antiquarian inquiry. As that decision has been finally made, we have no longer a motive for maintaining silence, and avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded us by the foregoing notice of our ingenious correspondent, Mr. M'Skimin, to state, that our conclusions are those arrived at in the Essay which received, not only the prize proposed by the Academy, but also the additional honour of their gold medal. These conclusions are, that the Round Towers are wholly of Christian origin, and erected for the twofold purposes of bellries and towers, in which the religious communities to whom they belonged deposited their books, sacred vessels, &c., and into which they themselves retired on occasions of sudden predatory attack. As Mr. Petrie's Essay is now in course of publication, we do not consider it fair to anticipate his proofs, which, we have no doubt, will be found satisfactory, and worthy of the award given by the Academy—an award which, it should be borne in mind, it was only entitled to on proofs that were deemed conclusive on the subject. That award, too, it should be observed, was all but unanimous; for, though one gentleman dissented, who considered as more satisfactory the evidences which were offered in Mr. O'Brien's essay, to prove that the Towers were temples and emblems of the god BODH, and erected previous to the foundation of Solomon's Temple, (!) it may be questioned how far that gentleman was a perfectly disinterested judge, in as much as he had previously written and published his own theories on the subject, the evidences for which were analyzed and rejected in Mr. Petrie's Essay, and lauded to the sun in various passages in that of his competitor. The Royal Irish Academy, in having taken the most judicious steps for bringing this long contested subject of antiquarian inquiry to a satisfactory termination, are entitled to the most unqualified praise.

To Mr. M'Skimin's account of the Round Tower of Antrim, we have to add, that its reputed architect, Gobban, of whom we have given several traditional notices, and have many still to give, was equally celebrated in our ancient ecclesiastical histories, as in our popular traditions.

The historical notices relative to him have been collected into Mr. Petrie's Essay, from which we learn that he flourished early in the sixth century, and was the most famous artificer in Ireland for his skill in building both of wood and stone. In the ancient life of St. Abban, given in Colgan, it is prophetically said that his fame in arts shall exist in our island to the end of time.

"Quidam famosissimus in omni arte lignorum et lapidum erat in Hibernia nomine Gobbanus, cujus artis fama usque in finem sæculi erit in ea." (Acta SS. p. 619.

Ed.

BANNOW, COUNTY WEXFORD.

(FOR THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL.)

Italy is not the only country in Europe in which great catastrophes have led to the disappearance of entire towns. If the ashes of Vesuvius overwhelmed Herculæum and Pompeii, and for a long period concealed them from us, a different cause has, in other parts of Europe, produced the same result. There remains, on the southern coast of Ireland, in the county of Wexford, a small bay, enclosed between two mountains; a sandy bank, and an irregular soil, arid, and covered with a sorry vegetation, distinguish it from the surrounding country, which is fertile, and is, indeed, rather picturesque. The heights are placed parallel, and crossed at right angles; and, such is their regularity that, at first sight, one is led to suppose them to be the work of man. This conjecture is strengthened on observing the summit of an ancient steeple rising in the midst of this solitude. Here, indeed, was once situated the town of Bannow, which is now buried in the sand. The parallel lines, the regular depression of the soil, clearly indicate the direction of the streets. "In following the course of one of these streets," says the narrator of this singular fact, "one sees where the sea originally approached it; for, on slightly digging into the sand, we discovered the remains of an old quay made of bricks." At the extremity of the town, a monument, half buried, yet remains; it is a church, the only entrance to which is by the roof; the interior has been cleared away, in all probability, by some traveller, or from being closed on all sides at the moment of the catastrophe, was preserved from the irruption of the sand, which lies heaped up all around it. To judge from the style, it was erected a considerable time previous to the invasion of Britain by the Normans. It is strange that this singular discovery has not excited sufficient attention to induce some one to prosecute further inquiries on this desolate shore. When the destruction of the town took place is unknown, but it cannot have been at a very distant period. Bannow, according to Maurice Regan and Sir James Ware, must have been a flourishing city, its riches and population must have been considerable. We find, from the archives of Wexford, which contain an account of the taxes levied on that district for the last eight hundred years, every indication of a rich, active, and numerous population. If the period when Bannow became the prey of the sands cannot be precisely marked out, we may notice that the phenomenon which caused its ruin still exists to a certain degree; around the spot are yet to be seen heaps of fresh sand, constantly agitated by the wind, but which is arrested in its course whenever it meets with any obstacle, and is spread over a considerable extent. This has occasioned a total change in the appearance not only of Bannow itself, but of the country around it. A map of the country laid down in 1657, points out the island of Slade in the bay opposite to it, from which it is separated by a channel; and the instructions given in nautical charts for the information of those who navigated this channel, points out the means of avoiding the shoals, which render it dangerous; at the present time the whole is united to the mainland; rocks, island, channel, exist no longer!—at least they are no longer to be distinguished.

The above account is extracted from a memoir lately read before the Geographical Society of Paris. I beg leave to forward it, in the hope that it may not be uninteresting to some of your readers.

Wexford,

M. O'R.